

## Eye For an I

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# Eye For an I

by [frogfarm](#)

## Summary

On the verge of a breakthrough, Dr. Matoi doesn't hesitate when he realizes what is required.

Pre-series. Isshin Matoi POV.

## Notes

For quite a while after watching Kill la Kill, I kept wanting to write fic for it, but couldn't come up with any ideas. Then one day I had an idea for a prequel to the series; and as I was mulling it over, this totally unrelated one popped into my head. I'm still working on the first, but hope to have it posted soon.

My writing here is admittedly more pedestrian than usual, but the idea itself is better than usual for me, and I've had enough problems with 'publish or perish' in the past that I just wanted to get this one done and out there. Hopefully that doesn't make it seem like a crappy gift. But if any of you reading aren't familiar with my giftee's [fantastic Kill la Kill sequel](#), check it out ASAP and prepare yourself for "ideas in abundance".

*Please continue the experiments.*

Those dying words were seared into his brain as if from a branding iron. They were all that was left to him. That, and a secret underground laboratory; a handful of stolen Life Fibers, and an even smaller dash of hope.

The man now known as Isshin Matoi stood at his work table, bent over a nanoscope. His movements were quick and careful as he meticulously made his way through a series of slides. At one point his long, unkempt hair fell forward, obscuring the lens, and he dashed it aside with a brief but sour look before returning to his work.

He had labored for months after Kinue's death, struggling mightily after the dual loss of her brother when Tsumugu resigned his position as lab assistant. The young man's grief had turned him wholly against the idea that people and clothing could exist together, and thus the fledgling movement they had jokingly termed Nudist Beach had been scattered to the four winds before it had gotten off the ground. He was still in touch with Mikisugi, but hesitated to force his one remaining friend to choose between loyalties. Everyone was now fighting the Kiryuin conglomerate in their own way. And they would all fail, without --

The pang in his heart made his fingers tremble, the slide come loose in his grasp. With a deep breath, he steadied his hand.

Yet even the daughter he had all but abandoned, just like her sister before her, would be helpless before Ragyo Kiryuin and her monstrous schemes. Unless --

"What am I missing!" The cry tore from his lips as his fists came down on the table. He glared at the scope, daring it to contradict him.

They had determined that the Life Fibers were indeed an actual life form, at least as *homo sapiens* understood it. That was where the understanding came to an end. Dr. Matoi's real breakthrough had been a lightning flash of insanity; the unthinkable act of splicing his own daughter's DNA into the alien threads before they were fully stitched together. Ryuko had been difficult enough to appease at the first tissue sampling, let alone the second. But the mad notion had proved the key advancement they so desperately needed. Now he stood on the cusp of achievement, success so nearly within his grasp he could feel it in every fiber of his own being.

This garment would be truly unprecedented. It must also be absolutely unique.

He suppressed a groan as he stood and straightened his back as best he could, given its new curvature. Across the table, the gleaming titanium arms of the robot surgeon hung limp and lifeless.

Like some alien vampire, the Life Fibers drank blood. That much was known. Some alien-human hybrids were able to more efficiently exploit the connection, drawing incalculable amounts of energy from comparatively miniscule quantities of blood. But the Kamui demanded more. And this would be a Kamui like no other.

Ryuko's DNA was not going to be enough.

Slowly, Dr. Matoi bowed his head. For but a moment he stood there, motionless. Then with a nod and a shrug, he seemed to force himself into motion. His easy, rolling gait would have appeared to most observers less like a man of science, more that of a seasoned seaman or fighter.

The mirror loomed as he rounded the corner of the stainless steel workbench. The vision it presented was thankfully brief, but perhaps all the more startling. If he lived to be a hundred - - and right now, the odds were against it -- he might never get used to this strange new appearance he had taken on. His only thought after surviving the attack on his vehicle had been to create an impenetrable disguise. And so he had transformed himself. From a dashing, debonair young fool to a hunched-over, bearded old fool.

He shook his head, sliding the keyboard from its recessed storage slot. It leapt forth on oiled springs, clicking silently into place beneath his fingers. As if appearances meant a thing, divorced from any and all other meaning! He had learned that to his heartbreak with Ragyo. The one good thing that could be said about his marriage to her was that someone else was not unfortunate enough to be in his place. And in all the world, he was one of a handful with the necessary knowledge to fight back.

*"Warning."* The voice of the AI, like nearly all of them these days, was young and female. Most commercial models had actually been implemented in software for the last fifteen to twenty years, but JANIS had a rack of custom hardware dedicated to nothing but vocal output. Too many people focused on the input side of things, spending countless hours on parsing and processing the often aurally and morally vague verbalities presented by their fellow human beings.

*"Warning,"* the AI repeated. *"Instructions as coded will violate section one of the Model Uniform Hippocratic Oath, version three point one. I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that -- do that -- do ththththt hahahahah --"*

A tiny puff of smoke went up from the speaker.

In the silence that now reigned, Matoi uttered a weary sigh as he opened a new shell in a separate tab. Quickly, carefully, he crafted a short and unambiguous set of commands to the firmware. It was a shame, really. JANIS had come far enough to retain a sense of humor, even when forced to directly go against her master's wishes. Luckily, when it came down to a fight, his homebrew rootkit had come out on top.

"You rest now," Matoi murmured, as with a firm hand he pressed ENTER. It was set in stone. JANIS would remain in a diagnostic loop until eight o'clock tomorrow morning, at which time (assuming no hardware problems) she would revert to normal bootup. The system would be online less than five minutes later, and by then it would be easier to obtain forgiveness than to ask permission.

His fingers did not hesitate as he returned to the calibration tab, picking up the growing batch of commands where he had left off. The speed of his typing grew slower still, his eyes flicking back and forth over the dense blocks of text, punctuated by the occasional glyph.

Everything seemed right, yet he knew from experience that such moments were tailor-made for a painful lesson in hubris. A disaster in the making, merely waiting to strike.

He reached out, and paused. And now, ever so slight, his hand did tremble.

It was over in the blink of an eye. Which he couldn't help thinking even as the split-second stab of pain became a dull ache and a throb, one half of the world gone from his sight even as his brain registered the sound of robotic arms whirring their servomotors, retracting and coming to rest. His gorge rose, his hands clutching the edge of the table as he focused desperately on not vomiting, not closing his remaining eye as it teared up and blinked and stared at the writhing mass of fabric contained inside the vacuum chamber. The Kamui was shuddering, gathering its own fabric in bunches. Much like --

*Ah! God!* The voice was deep, and male, but with a keen note of suffering. *The pain! It's --*

"Blinding." The doctor eased himself into his reclining chair with a rueful chuckle. "Yes."

He watched as the Kamui sank to the floor of the chamber with a quiet groan. The colorful lapels on either side of the collar hung limp and sagging, the garment itself hunched over like a bent and broken man. Again, a mirror of his own condition.

"Listen." Dr. Matoi put all the urgency he could muster into the word. It had the desired result: The Kamui seemed to lift its head, staring back at him with its own singular eye, a yellow bullseye radiating out from the lapel.

"You've been injected with foreign tissue. My tissue." The bandaged hole in his head continued to throb as the doctor took in the other side of the Kamui's collar, the 'X' across the eye resembling a piratical patch. "You are literally feeling my pain. It will pass."

The Kamui trembled, but remained silent. Dr. Matoi slowly reached over and opened the door to the chamber.

"You can come out of there."

Equally slowly, the Kamui leaned over and peered out the door. Matoi smiled, pointing to his own impromptu eyepatch.

"I am your creator."

*You --* The Kamui sounded as if it were struggling with the concept. *You are God?*

"Oh, no." He watched as the sentient sailor uniform continued to inch its way out of the chamber, practically oozing onto the floor of his laboratory to finally straighten and 'stand' upright. It was one of the most bizarre things he had ever witnessed.

"But in a way, I am your father." He motioned to the console on the desk, the attached set of monitors slaved together in a single display. "And there are things you must know."

Even given the limitations of language, it took surprisingly little time to effectively dump the contents of his knowledgebase to the Kamui's awareness. With each fresh revelation, his

creation was newly shocked and reemboldened to aid his daughters, to do whatever lay within its power to put an end to Ragyo and her diabolical conspiracies against humanity. More than once he was forced to pause to allow the hybrid a moment in order to vent its anger, its sheer outrage on behalf of all life on Earth threatened by its fellows. It only strengthened the doctor's conviction, even as he found himself growing more fond of the Kamui as their conversation progressed. It had been too long since he had spoken to anyone but the various AI's. He hadn't realized how starved he had become for human contact.

*Not human*, he thought. Of course. But that was just the point.

"Only Life Fibers can defeat Life Fibers." Overhead, the flourescents reflected off of the giant blades in his hand. The Kamui was giving them a cautious inspection, sniffing them up and down. "That is the entire reason for your creation -- and of these Rending Scissors."

*I understand.* A subtle vibration of excitement underlay the Kamui's calm pronouncement. *I will not fail.*

A quiet pride suffused Dr. Matoi's being. "I'm sure of it."

*I will tell her all that you have said. And together, we will --*

"No."

The Kamui blinked its eye, then twice more. Dr. Matoi shook his head.

"You will remember all of this -- when it is told to you. There are others -- in Nudist Beach, and elsewhere -- who know of these things. But until then, my friend..." And the doctor sighed, as he shook his head once more. "You must forget."

*But why?* The garment's bewilderment was plain. *As you yourself said -- this knowledge is vital. Without it, how are we to fight?*

"Every new thing we learn must build upon what came before." Dr. Matoi lay his hand on the Kamui's shoulder and gave a reassuring squeeze. It was a marvel in the very solidity of its posture; the unmistakable presence of life in a thing that should not be.

"My daughter already despises me. And rightly so," he continued, brushing off the garment's obvious distress. "In my quest to save the world, I abandoned those closest to me. Those who depended on me...who had no one else to turn to."

The Kamui shifted uncomfortably. It seemed at a loss for words.

"If Ryuko were to learn everything at once, right now -- it would overwhelm her. And while she may despise me..."

His outstretched hand trembled, as the Kamui stared up at him.

"She must not reject you."

As one, their eyes regarded each other.

"For her -- you must be more than a friend."

Dr. Matoi reached into the breast pocket of his labcoat.

"You must be the father I have failed to be."

The Kamui's eye expanded out in a sudden, frantic bulge.

Then just as quickly deflated, as the Jamming Needle took effect.

"Sleep now." He stooped to gather up the comatose uniform, standing with a slight wince.

"Soon, you will have blood."

The Kamui lay in his arms, dead to the world. And Dr. Matoi gazed upon his creation with fond regard; and also with great sorrow.

"All too soon."

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